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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: THE HIGH IMPACT OF CULTURAL AND SPORTS PROGRAMS

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11. SUMMARY: EMBASSY KUWAIT'S CULTURAL AND SPORTS OUTREACH EFFORTS HAVE BEEN EFFECTIVE IN REACHING NEW AND DIVERSE AUDIENCES OF YOUNG KUWAITIS. SPORTS PROGRAMS SERVE AS A SUPERB TOOL WITH WHICH TO REACH YOUNG KUWAITI MALES, A KEY DEMOGRAPHIC IN THE STRUGGLE FOR HEARTS AND MINDS, AS WELL AS YOUNG KUWAITI FEMALES. THE MISSION'S THREE SPORTS PROGRAMS CONDUCTED IN 2004-2005 RESULTED IN A HIGH POSITIVE IMPACT BY CHANGING PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS ABOUT AMERICAN SOCIETY AND VALUES THROUGH SHARING THE COMMON AMERICAN AND KUWAITI VALUES OF OPEN COMPETITION AND TEAMWORK. CULTURAL EVENTS SUCH AS MUSICAL GROUPS AND ART EXHIBITS ALSO HAVE ACHIEVED HIGH IMPACT RESULTS WITH DIVERSE AUDIENCES, FROM THE LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE SIDES OF KUWAITI SOCIETY. THIS CABLE INCLUDES SPECIFIC PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS IN PARAGRAPHS 10-15. END SUMMARY.

A SLAM-DUNK: SPORTS OUTREACH TO YOUNG KUWAITIS

12. THE MISSION HAS SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENTED THREE HIGH-PROFILE BASKETBALL PROGRAMS THAT ALLOWED US TO DIRECTLY REACH, IN TOTAL, MORE THAN 400 YOUNG KUWAITIS (REFTELS E AND F). IN DECEMBER, 2004, THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION IMPLEMENTED A CULTURE CONNECT ENVOY PROGRAM FEATURING TWO FORMER GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY BASKETBALL PLAYERS, OMARI FAULKNER AND COURTLAND FREEMAN. THE SECOND HIGH-PROFILE SPORTS EVENT WAS A WOMEN'S BASKETBALL GAME BETWEEN THE KUWAITI WOMEN'S SPORTS CLUB AL-FATAT AND A TEAM OF AMERICAN FEMALE SOLDIERS FROM CAMP ARIFJAN. EMBASSY PUBLIC AFFAIRS ORGANIZED THE EVENT AND RECEIVED POSITIVE PRESS COVERAGE. THE EVENT WAS SO POPULAR WITH THE WOMEN'S CLUB, THAT THEY REQUESTED A RETURN MATCH THAT WILL BE ORGANIZED IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THE THIRD HIGH IMPACT BASKETBALL EVENT FEATURED A GROUP OF 8 NCAA BASKETBALL COACHES WHO WERE IN KUWAIT AS PART OF "OPERATION HARDWOOD," A DOD PROGRAM THAT BROUGHT THE COACHES TO THE U.S. MILITARY BASE AT CAMP ARIFJAN TO INTERACT WITH THE TROOPS STATIONED IN KUWAIT. WITH THE COOPERATION OF CFLCC-MILITARY PUBLIC AFFAIRS, EMBASSY PUBLIC AFFAIRS ARRANGED FOR THESE COACHES TO HOLD CLINICS FOR KUWAITI PLAYERS, AGED 12 TO 14, AND THEIR COACHES.

USING MUSIC TO DELIVER THE MESSAGE

13. TWO RECENT MUSICAL PROGRAMS IN KUWAIT ALSO REAFFIRMED THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CULTURAL PROGRAMMING IN REACHING DIVERSE AUDIENCES. IN SEPTEMBER, 2005, PUBLIC AFFAIRS ORGANIZED A VISIT BY THE AMERICAN ROCK BAND "CIRCUS GUY" TO PROMOTE STUDY IN THE U.S.A. AND THE COMMON CULTURAL

TRADITIONS OF AMERICAN AND ARABIC MUSIC (REFTEL C). THE BAND, WHICH INCLUDES TWO ARAB-AMERICANS, PLAYED U.S. ROCK MUSIC, INCLUDED ARABIC TUNES IN THEIR CONCERT, PERCEPTIBLY CONNECTING WITH THEIR AUDIENCES (NUMBERING AROUND 3,000 TOTAL THROUGHOUT THE TOUR). THE CIRCUS GUY TOUR HAD THREE PRIMARY GOALS: TO PROMOTE STUDY IN THE U.S., TO SHARE AMERICAN CULTURE WITH KUWAITI YOUTH AUDIENCES, AND TO SHOW YOUNG KUWAITI AUDIENCES THAT ARAB-AMERICANS ARE PROUD OF THEIR HERITAGE AS ARABS AND AS AMERICANS.

¶4. THE SECOND MUSICAL TOUR HOSTED BY THE EMBASSY WAS THE "NEW ORLEANS ALL-STAR BRASS BAND," BROUGHT TO KUWAIT ON NOVEMBER 24, 2005, TO THANK KUWAIT FOR ITS SUPPORT FOLLOWING HURRICANE KATRINA. THE AUDIENCE WAS COMPRISED OF LEADING MEMBERS OF KEY MPP TARGET GROUPS, INCLUDING KUWAITI GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, BUSINESS LEADERS AND CLOSE EMBASSY CONTACTS. THE CONCERT WAS AN OUTSTANDING SUCCESS THAT GARNERED MUCH POSITIVE FEEDBACK FROM ATTENDEES. SHORTLY AFTER THE NEW ORLEANS CONCERT, DURING THE VISIT OF IIP COORDINATOR ALEX FELDMAN TO A LOCAL DIWANIYA, (A KUWAITI GATHERING PLACE WHERE ISSUES OF THE DAY ARE DISCUSSED), ONE CONTACT COMPLAINED THAT THE EMBASSY WAS NEGLECTING LARGE CULTURAL PROGRAMS, AND "SHOULD DO MORE EVENTS SUCH AS THE NEW ORLEANS CONCERT" BECAUSE DIRECT CULTURAL INTERACTION HAS A POWERFUL POSITIVE IMPACT IN KUWAIT.

¶5. POST EMPHASIZES THAT WHILE BOTH OF THESE EVENTS WERE MUSICAL PERFORMANCES, THEY SUCCESSFULLY REACHED FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT AUDIENCES WITH DIFFERENT MESSAGES AND EARNED HIGH-MARKS FROM KUWAITI CONTACTS.

FILMS FOR THE FREEDOM AGENDA

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¶6. THE EMBASSY HAS ALSO HAD GREAT SUCCESS USING FILM TO MESSAGE DIVERSE TARGETED AUDIENCES. THE POLITICAL SECTION HAS HELD FILM EVENTS TO PROMOTE DEMOCRACY AND THE FREEDOM AGENDA, WHILE PUBLIC AFFAIRS ORGANIZED MOVIE NIGHTS TO BRING NON-ELITE ACCESS ENGLISH-LANGUAGE STUDENTS TO THE EMBASSY TO SEE FILMS RELEVANT TO VARIOUS ASPECTS OF AMERICAN SOCIETY (REFTELS B AND G). MOVIE NIGHTS TARGETING NON-ELITE NINTH- AND TENTH-GRADE STUDENTS AND THEIR PARENTS PROVIDES THE EMBASSY ITS FIRST INTERACTION WITH THESE KUWAITIS.

ART IN EMBASSIES ATTRACTS NEW CONTACTS

¶7. VISUAL ART EXHIBITS ALSO HAVE BEEN A WELCOME ADDITION TO OUR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY EFFORTS IN KUWAIT. THE ART IN EMBASSIES PROGRAM HAS PROVIDED THE EMBASSY A TOOL WITH WHICH TO ATTRACT DIVERSE GROUPS OF ARTISTS AS WELL AS TRADITIONALLY CONSERVATIVE FEMALE STUDENTS TO INTRODUCE THEM TO AMERICAN ART. WHILE NOT AS BROAD-REACHING AS OTHER CULTURAL PROGRAMS, THE VISUAL ARTS COMMUNITY IN KUWAIT IS STRONG AND ACTIVE AND HAS BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN PROMOTING TOLERANCE THROUGH THEIR WORK.

CONSTRAINTS TO ARTS AND CULTURAL PROGRAMMING

¶8. CONSTRAINTS TO EFFECTIVELY UTILIZING CULTURAL, ARTS OR SPORTS PROGRAMMING ARE MOST OFTEN ASSOCIATED WITH CULTURAL SENSITIVITIES IN THIS CONSERVATIVE ISLAMIC ENVIRONMENT. PERFORMING ARTS, VISUAL ARTS OR FILM PROGRAMMING MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT CULTURAL SENSITIVITIES REGARDING COSTUMES, PROVOCATIVE DANCING, OR SEXUAL CONTENT. THE GREATEST CONSTRAINT TO ARTS AND CULTURAL PROGRAMMING IS COST. MOST MUSICAL GROUPS WITH FOUR OR MORE MEMBERS COST AT LEAST \$30,000, AN AMOUNT NEARLY EQUIVALENT TO YEARLY PD PROGRAM FUNDS.

PARTNERSHIPS IN CULTURAL PROGRAMMING

¶9. THE MISSION HAS HAD LIMITED SUCCESS COLLABORATING ON CULTURAL PROGRAMS WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR. THE MOST SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP TO-DATE HAS BEEN WITH CHEVRON ON SUMMER EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR ACCESS SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS (REFTEL D). THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY HAS SUPPORTED THE EMBASSY'S ORGANIZATION OF ANNUAL NATIONAL DAY EVENTS. SUCCESSFUL CULTURAL COLLABORATIONS HAVE PRIMARILY TAKEN PLACE WITH KUWAITI SPORTS CLUBS, ARTS ASSOCIATIONS, AND WITH U.S. MILITARY PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICES.

RECOMMENDED PROGRAMMING

¶10. EMBASSY EFFORTS TO FULFILL MPP OBJECTIVES BENEFIT FROM CULTURAL AND SPORTS PROGRAMMING, WHICH PROVIDE ACCESS TO AUDIENCES OTHERWISE INACCESSIBLE, SUCH AS STUDENT AUDIENCES IN PLACES THEY FREQUENT -- SCHOOLS, SHOPPING MALLS, OR SPORTS CLUBS. THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMS WOULD SUPPORT OUTREACH EFFORTS TO DIVERSE KUWAITI AUDIENCES WITH THE AIM OF IMPROVING NEGATIVE PUBLIC OPINION OR MISPERCEPTIONS THAT THWART U.S. INTERESTS:

¶11. MUSIC: A TOUR OF TRADITIONAL NEW ORLEANS BANDS WOULD BE WELCOME IN BUILDING ADDITIONAL SUPPORT IN KUWAIT FOR THE RE-BIRTH OF NEW ORLEANS, AS WELL AS FOR DEMONSTRATING AMERICAN APPRECIATION FOR MULTICULTURALISM. THE RECENT 24-HOUR VISIT BY THE NEW ORLEANS ALL-STAR BAND WAS TOO BRIEF IN LENGTH TO ALLOW FOR THE BROAD IMPACT IT COULD HAVE HAD. A TOUR OF THREE TO FOUR DAYS WOULD HAVE OFFERED THE OPPORTUNITY TO REACH MORE DIVERSE AND LARGER AUDIENCES, INCLUDING YOUTH AND NON-ELITES.

¶12. SPORTS: BASKETBALL, SOCCER AND OTHER SPORTS PROGRAMS, PERHAPS IN THE FORM OF VISITING "CULTURE CONNECT ENVOYS," ARE HIGH-IMPACT PROGRAMS THAT WOULD ASSIST EMBASSY EFFORTS TO REACH MANY YOUNG KUWAITI BOYS AND GIRLS AT A RELATIVELY LOW COST. BASKETBALL IS AN ENORMOUSLY POPULAR U.S. EXPORT AS IS PRO-WRESTLING. THE WORLD CUP IN THE SUMMER OF 2006 MAY ALSO PROVIDE A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO PROMOTE SOCCER PROGRAMS IN TANDEM WITH KUWAITI PARTNERS AND OTHER DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS IN KUWAIT. THE MISSION PLANS TO CONTINUE SPORTS OUTREACH BY PARTNERING WITH LOCAL SPORTS CLUBS AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS TO DEVELOP UNIQUE PROGRAMS SUCH AS AN "AMERICAN-STYLE" 3-ON-3 BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT FOR YOUNG KUWAITI BOYS AND GIRLS, BEING PLANNED FOR MARCH, 2006.

¶13. FILM: THE DEVELOPMENT BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF A FILM FESTIVAL PACKAGE THAT WOULD CIRCULATE REGIONALLY, PERHAPS ACCOMPANIED BY A SPEAKER, WOULD ENHANCE EMBASSY EFFORTS TO SPREAD POSITIVE IMAGES AND MESSAGES ABOUT AMERICA

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THROUGH FILM. OUR PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION IS CURRENTLY ORGANIZING SUCH A FILM FESTIVAL WITH KUWAITI PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS. MISSIONS WOULD BE BETTER ABLE TO ORGANIZE FILM FESTIVALS EFFICIENTLY IF THE DEPARTMENT'S FILM OFFICE COULD PREPARE A FILM FESTIVAL PACKAGE OF SEVEN TO EIGHT ENTERTAINING AND INFORMATIVE FILMS REPRESENTING A RANGE OF GENRES (ON 35 MM CELLULOID) THAT ADVANCE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF AMERICAN SOCIETY AND VALUES. THESE FILMS SHOULD DISPLAY HIGH PRODUCTION VALUES AS WELL AS ARTISTRY, FOCUS ON TOPICS THAT ENCOURAGE DIALOGUE AND DISCUSSION, AND BE COMPATIBLE WITH CONSERVATIVE SOCIAL MORES (MEANING LIMITED SEXUAL CONTENT). THE FESTIVAL KIT ALSO SHOULD INCLUDE PROMOTIONAL AND BACKGROUND MATERIALS. SUCH TURNKEY PACKAGES WOULD MORE EFFICIENTLY AID PUBLIC AFFAIRS IN EFFORTS TO CONDUCT FILM FESTIVALS.

¶14. VISUAL ARTS: WHILE THE VISUAL ARTS COMMUNITY IN KUWAIT IS VERY ACTIVE, IT REACHES A SMALL, OFTEN LIBERALLY-INCLINED COMMUNITY. THE EMBASSY UTILIZED THE ART IN EMBASSIES PROGRAM TO HOST A RECEPTION FOR KUWAITI ARTISTS AND TO CONDUCT PROGRAMS FOR KUWAITI STUDENTS DURING THE PAST YEAR. WE HOPE TO BRING A PARTICIPATING AMERICAN ARTIST TO KUWAIT TO FOLLOW UP ON AND AUGMENT THESE ACTIVITIES WITH THIS

SEGMENT OF KUWAITI SOCIETY. TO EXPAND OUR VISUAL ARTS OUTREACH TO CONSERVATIVE ARAB AND ISLAMIC AUDIENCES, A TRAVELING EXHIBIT OF THE WORKS OF AMERICAN MUSLIM CALLIGRAPHERS ACCOMPANIED BY THE ARTISTS, WOULD HAVE A HUGE IMPACT ON THREE KEY POST GOALS. SUCH A PROGRAM WOULD BOOST OUR OUTREACH DIRECTLY TO CONSERVATIVE ISLAMIC COMMUNITIES, WOULD EXPAND THE GROWING COOPERATION WE HAVE ESTABLISHED WITH THE GOK'S MINISTRY OF AWQAF AND ISLAMIC AFFAIRS, AND ADD TO OUR ONGOING COOPERATION WITH KUWAIT'S ARTS SOCIETIES. EMBASSIES KUWAIT AND MANAMA REQUESTED SUCH A PROGRAM THROUGH THE CULTURE CONNECT ENVOY PROGRAM, BUT THE ARTIST, MOHAMED ZAKARIYA, HAD HEALTH ISSUES THAT PREVENTED HIM FROM TRAVELING TO THE REGION. AN AMERICAN ARTIST WITH SIMILARLY IMPRESSIVE CREDENTIALS IN THE FIELDS OF ARABIC CALLIGRAPHY OR ISLAMIC ART WOULD GUARANTEE SUCCESSFUL, HIGH-IMPACT PROGRAMS THAT WOULD BY NATURE EMPHASIZE THE BEAUTY AND INHERENT MESSAGE OF TOLERANCE WITHIN THE ART OF AMERICAN ISLAMIC ARTISTS.

¶15. THEATER: THE EMBASSY HAS NOT PROGRAMMED THEATER EVENTS OR DRAMATIC ARTS IN RECENT YEARS. OUR ASSESSMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT IN KUWAIT IS THAT PROGRAMMING A PLAY OR OTHER DRAMATIC ARTS PERFORMANCE WOULD BE WELL-RECEIVED, HAVE A STRONG INFLUENCE ON THE PARTICIPANTS, AND LEAVE A POSITIVE IMPRESSION. THEATER PERFORMANCES FEATURING CONTEMPORARY OR CLASSICAL AMERICAN THEMES OR SUBJECTS RELATED TO THE FREEDOM AGENDA WOULD BE FEASIBLE IN KUWAIT. A PLAY FEATURING A SMALL CAST WITH MINIMAL STAGING AND SET REQUIREMENTS WOULD BE ECONOMICAL AND EFFECTIVE IN CONNECTING WITH AUDIENCES IN NEW WAYS.

HIGH IMPACT RESULTS WORTH THE COSTS OF ENGAGING

¶16. COMMENT: DESPITE THE FISCAL AND CULTURAL CONSTRAINTS AND BASED ON OUR EXPERIENCES OVER THE PAST YEAR, THIS EMBASSY IS CONVINCED THAT THE BENEFITS OF ARTS, CULTURAL, AND SPORTS PROGRAMMING FAR OUTWEIGH THE COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THEM IN TERMS OF ENGAGING NEW AND TARGET AUDIENCES, INCLUDING A BROAD RANGE OF STUDENT POPULATIONS AND CONSERVATIVE COMMUNITIES, WITH THE VIEW TO CHANGING NEGATIVE ATTITUDES TOWARD AMERICAN SOCIETY AND POLICIES. END COMMENT.

LEBARON